DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 156 627 SP 012 504

AUTHOR Pietras, Thomas P.
TITLE Teachers' Verbal and Nonverbal Behavior as Indices of Teacher Expectancy.
PUB DATE 28 Mar 78
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting, American Educational Research Association (Toronto, Canada, March 27-31, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Management; *Interaction Process Analysis; *Language Attitudes; *Nonverbal Communication; Response Mode; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Behavior; Teacher Response; *Verbal Communication

ABSTRACT

The implications of a teacher's language behavior, both verbal and nonverbal, are explored. These means of communication indicate not only the teacher's academic expectancy concerning students but also social and behavioral judgments. Verbal messages are usually explicit and deal with the content of the conversation, but children can be adept at interpreting a teacher's verbal behavior in terms of approval or disapproval. More subtle, but equally important, is the nonverbal component of language behavior. Facial expression, gestures, posture, and body movements, which reveal a teacher's attitudes, feelings, and state of mind, are continuously observed and assessed by students. It is hypothesized that if teachers learn to selfmonitor their verbal and nonverbal responses to students they can control any adverse effects their expectancy may have upon individual students. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Thomas P. Pietras

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

"Teachers' Verbal and Nonverbal Behavior as Indices of Teacher Expectancy"

Thomas P. Pietras

Director of Language Arts

Ann Arbor (Michigan) Public Schools

Abstract

A theoretical paper which delineates the need for and the implications of teachers attending to their languaging behavior while in the process of instruction and classroom management. This languaging behavior can be an indicator of the teachers' academic and social expectancy concerning their students'. Research in verbal and nonverbal behavior provide the basis for the definition of "languaging behavior."

Moreover, it is hypothesized that if teachers learn to self monitor their verbal and nonverbal responses to students, they can control for the adverse effects of teacher expectancy.

Paper prepared for AERA Conference.
March 28, 1978, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

SP012 504

Research in semantics indicates that the study of language is the study of human behavior; more specifically, as an individual uses language to relate to reality, he more often than not tells us more about himself than he does about reality, i.e., language is truly the expression of an individual's inner feelings and thoughts from his point of view (Postman and Weingartner, 1967).

Therefore, it is the purpose of this paper to delineate the need for and the implications of teachers attending to their languaging behavior while in the process of instruction and classroom management. This languaging behavior can be an indicator of the academic and social expectancy they have for their students.

Central to the thesis of this paper is an understanding of the construct, languaging behavior. It is here defined as any behavior that stimulates meaning in a person who perceives that behavior. This is a receiver oriented definition. Moreover, it implicitly states that communication is not confined nor limited to words, i.e., language. Behavioral scientists have come to recognize that behavior generally categorized as nonverbal plays as large a role as verbal behavior in making speakers effective or ineffective communicators. For example, one area of nonverbal communication inquiry is gaze direction during conversations (Kendon, 1967; Exline, 1971). What researchers in such an area of inquiry express is a concern for the effect that nonverbal behavior has on the production and interpretation of spoken messages. Thus an individual's languaging behavior encompasses verbal as well as nonverbal signals.

Within the context of teacher languaging behavior, Ball (1972) has provided a chart which describes the characteristics of teacher verbal behavior developed by a prominent researcher in this area, Ned Flanders.

Integrative Pattern
accepts, clarifies, supports ideas and feelings of students; praises and encourages; stimulates pupil participation in decision making.

Gives Information
expresses, lectures

Dominative Pattern
gives directions or orders, criticizes or deprecates pupil behavior, justifies one's position or authority.

Research by Firestone and Brody (1975) using the Flander's Interaction Analysis to classify positive, neutral, and negative interactions between teachers and kindergarten children followed into first grade found that these interactions did provide a significant increase in one's ability to predict the academic performance of these children. Specifically they report:

> The percentage of negative interactions in the last half of kindergarten contributed a significant increase in variance on all five subscores of the MAT. It is clear that children who experienced the highest percentage of negative interactions with their kindergarten teacher were also children who did more poorly on the MAT at the end of first grade. Since these results exist with IQ controlled, it removes the possibility that negative interactions relate negatively to achievement solely because the "duller" students were also those who received negative interactions. In addition, another interaction variable, the total number of times students were chosen to demonstrate something in class, significantly and positively related to their subscores on word knowledge and total reading (p. 548).

Verbal messages are usually considered explicit and the receiver assumes that they are under the conscious control of the sender; moreover, these verbal messages (speech) are generally thought to deal with the content of the conversation (Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson, 1967). Given this understanding of verbal messages, i.e., the speaker is consciously, deliberately saying something specific about some event,then what are teachers saying when they make statements such as:

polite children don't interrupt;
sit still and do your work;
some pupils are never prepared;
that question is not about our topic;
say it the right way;
I'll talk to you later;
I've no time for such silly talk;
don't be so slow in getting started;
you really don't know who (some
well known story character) is?

One can be sure that teachers reading these examples would claim that only a few, insensitive colleagues in their ranks would utter such statements or if they knowingly did so, it would be for appropriate reasons. However, Bowie and Morgan (1962) investigated the nature and extent of the value system of elementary teachers communicated through their verbal behavior to their students. They assumed that verbal statements constitute one valid means of inferring an individual's value system.

Using the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values, the researchers classified fifty elementary teachers into five groups: (I) theoretical (discovery of truth), (II) religious (unity), (III) social (love of people), (IV) political (power), (V) economic (utility). Teacher statements during classroom instruction were recorded with statements by individual teachers ranging in number from 241 to 690 with an average of 435.

The researchers classified these statements according to the following framework.

Role-Taking Processes

A. Supportive Roles
   1. Rewards, praises, compliments
   2. Protects, reassures, assists
   3. Affirms
   4. Uses Humor
   5. Recognizes
   6. Apologizes
   7. Reflects

B. Instructive Roles
   1. Suggests
   2. Directs
   3. Commands
   4. Explains

C. Non-Supportive Roles
   1. Ignores
   2. Checks, contrasts, corrects
   3. Contradicts, criticizes
   4. Shames, threatens, reprimands, uses sarcasm
   5. Deprives, punishes

D. Problem-Solving Roles
   1. Fosters creative thinking
   2. Encourages pupil-teaching planning
   3. Uses scientific methods

Content Categories

I. Subject Matter

II. Standards of Achievement

III. School Rules and Regulations
   1. Time-speed
   2. Orderliness
   3. Attention
   4. Raising hands
   5. Sitting in seats
   6. Quietness
   7. Routine matters
   8. Pupil's request
   9. Chewing gum

IV. Social Expectations
   1. Cleanliness-neatness
   2. Care of property
   3. Appropriate language
   4. Sharing
   5. Taking turns
   6. Helping

7. Politeness (manners)
8. Pupil welfare
9. Personal reference
10. Fairness (p.338).

Among their findings, Bowie and Morgan report the following significant ones.

1. Teachers whose values are characterized by a high Religious value (Group II) tend to make more supportive statements than teachers whose value systems are characterized by a high Political value (Group IV). The statistical data support this hypothesis at the. 001 level of significance.

2. Teachers whose value systems are characterized by a high Social value (Group III) tend to emphasize social expectations to a greater extent than teachers whose value systems are characterized by a high Political value (Group IV). The statistical data support this hypothesis at the. 001 level of significance.

3. Teachers whose value systems have a high Political value (Group IV) tend to make more non-supportive statements than teachers whose value systems are characterized by a high Religious value (Group II). This hypothesis is supported by the data at the. 001 level of significance (p. 341 & 344).

Thus, by carefully analyzing the framework used in this study for classifying teachers' verbal statements, it becomes apparent that teachers do communicate an expectancy of how they perceive children are to behave and/or learn. Moreover, children are quite adept at interpreting the verbal behavior of their teachers in terms of how they "stand" relative to being in or out of favor with them.

Listen to the reasons a youngster gives when he says he knows his teacher doesn't like him because:

she talks mean to me;
she cuts me down;
she only yells at me;
she always corrects me;
she only asks me hard questions.

Ask this child's teacher about these perceptions and most likely the response will be disbelief. What teachers can do to arrive at some approximation of the actual truth is to monitor their verbal behavior to see if they are transmitting negative verbal messages to some of their students.

What is important about the studies reviewed here is that the researchers focused their attention on the teachers' verbal behavior. There is currently a proliferation of research that is investigating teacher expectancy from the perspective of how students' verbal behavior can influence teacher judgement (Pietras, 1978). While this research is an important contribution to clarifying some of the reasons why certain children may not succeed in school as well as they potentially might, it still focuses on the children as being a major source of the problem. More research is needed which focuses on the verbal behavior of teachers which appears to be an equally important source of the problems associated with teacher expectancy.

Turning our attention to the nonverbal component of languaging behavior, two researchers who have generated serious interest in kinesics (body movement) are Roy Birdwhistell and Paul Ekman. Birdwhistell stresses the relationship between body language and spoken language in order to better understand the communication process per se.

On the other hand, Ekman stresses the relationship of nonverbal behavior to inner feeling states and to the decoding of these states by others. The scientific literature on body movement and gestures is quite extensive. Davis (1972) has compiled an annotated bibliography of 900 works in this area.

Galloway (1962) defines nonverbal communication as transmitting a thought or feeling from one person to another through gesture, posture, facial expression, tone and quality of voice, or physical contact as an auxiliary function to speech or without speech.

Galloway's studies (1962, 1970) show that both teachers and students continuously communicate attitudes, feelings, and values through their nonverbal behavior. He emphasized the importance of developing teacher awareness of these classroom nonverbal behaviors in order that congruency and credibility be established in the total behavioral process of teacher communication. Torrance (1960) reports that students have a tendency to pay particular attention to the sincerity of messages by attuning to the nonverbal messages of the teacher to see if they support the verbal. Hodge (1971) reports that teachers can do much to personalize and communicate their concern and acceptance of students through eye contact.

In a pioneer study, Gates (1927) pointed out that children found it much easier to differentiate between facial expressions than verbal expressions or body positions. Forty years later, Mehrabian and Ferris (1967) found through their research that the facial components received two thirds the weight received by all other communicative components. Moreover, Azidel and Mehrabian (1969) specifically state the importance of facial expressions over the verbal channel:

> In both the facial and vocal channels, communications of negative attitudes are more effective than those of positive. In other words, negative attitude communications will be more discernible than the corresponding set of positive attitude communications.

Thus, facial modality can be independent of verbal expression.

Knapp (1971) states that eye contact of extended duration can be used to indicate aggressiveness or create anxiety in others. On the other hand, competition, dislike, tension, or a recent deception may casue a decrease in eye contact. Eye avoidance can act as an insulator against discovery.

Feldman (1976) investigated whether or not teachers reveal through nonverbal cues that they are being untruthful to students with their verbal behavior, i.e., the teacher may verbally state something positive while expressing negative feelings toward the student nonverbally. He found that under certain circumstances teachers do reveal through their nonverbal behavior their negative affect. Also, untrained observers can discern this behavior; this suggests that students can potentially be aware of teachers' underlying feelings toward them regardless of the verbal behavior their teachers employ to mask those feelings.

Beatty and Beatty (1976) investigated the effects of varying verbal - nonverbal consistency on teacher believability, i. e., if paralinguistic cues (fluency, tone, pitch, rate, tempo, volume, and quality) are consistent with verbal messages, then students will have credibility in what their teachers are trying to communicate. Their findings partially support their hypothesis.

Kachur et al. (1977) describe the "silent language" of teachers which is their posture, facial expression, and movements. Students continuously observe and assess their teachers' attitudes, feelings, moods, and states of mind.

What is communicated to students when a teacher enters a room with a relaxed gait, a smile, and a robust "good morning" versus a teacher who enters with a shuffle, a frown, and a somber "get your books out." Teacher enthusiasm equals great variation in tone and voice, positive anticipatory facial expressions, rapidity in presentation speed, gesturing and movement throughout the room, direct eye contact, reassuring smile, mutual glance, touch of support on the arm, shoulder, back, or head, nod of head.

Thus, it appears that the area of nonverbal communication is a very viable area of research relative to teaching and learning. As in the area of verbal communication, teachers can transmit signals to their students about how they perceive that their students will behave and/or learn. Blyth (1976) has summarized this situation well as he states:

> . . . non-verbal behaviour is itself a part of the hidden curriculum. Surprisingly little attention has been paid to the non-verbal aspects of signalling by teachers to pupils, and by pupils to teachers and other pupils, which express differential approval and thus lead to differential reinforcement of verbal lessons. This, at least, is open to some form of empirical investigation. It appears quite likely from experiences that we as a group have considered, that teachers and pupils form firm initial impressions about the value and the ease of verbal learning by watching one another's non-verbal behaviour before a word is spoken (p. 113).

In conclusion, even though a definitive body cf research is not available for immediate and/or practical application, there is enough evidence that should encourage teachers to become aware of their nonverbal communication. To aid in this awareness, the following chart, developed by Charles

Galloway to describe the characteristics of teachers' nonverbal behavior, can be very useful.

> Encouraging
> enthusiastic approval, warmth, emotional support, nurturent act, willing to listen, attentiveness, eye contact.
>
> Pro Forma (neutral)
> neither encourages nor inhibits communication.
>
> Inhibiting
> unwilling or unable to be attentive, disinterested, non-responsive, ignoring, withdrawn, negative overtones, frowning, belittling, threatening (Ball, 1972, p. 8).

By way of summary, this paper proposed to define the construct, languaging behavior as it applied to teacher expectancy. By definition, languaging behavior is a combination and interaction of both verbal and nonverbal communication. Although each of these was discussed as a separate entities, they are not discrete. It is the responsibility of the reader to integrate these components in his/her thinking to truly understand the totality of the communication process that occurs whenever a teacher is engaged in instruction and/or classroom management. Moreover, this is necessary if one is to attend to the potential adverse effects of teacher expectancy as communicated by teachers via their languaging behavior to their students.

References

Azidel, S.F. and Mehrabian, A. "The Ability To Communicate and Infer Positive and Negative Attitudes Facially and Vocally," Journal of Experimental Research in Personality, Vol. 3, 1969, 233 - 241.

Ball, H.G. "Fducable Mentally Retarded Students' Perceptions of Teacher Nonverbal Behavior," ED 071 226, (1972).

Beatty, P.J. and Beatty, M.J. "An Investigation of The Believability Of Verbal Messages Accompanied By Incongruent Paralinguistic Cues," Reading Improvement, Summer, No. 2, 1976, 105-107.

Blyth, W.A.L. " Non-Verbal Elements in Education: Some New Perspectives," British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, June, 1976, 109 - 126.

Bowie, L.B. and Morgan, H.G. "Personal Values and Verbal Behavior of Teachers," Journal of Experimental Education, Vol. 30, No. 4, June, 1962, 337 - 345.

Davis, Flora. Inside Intuition What We Know About Nonverbal Communication, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1973.

Exline, R.V. "Visual Interaction: The Glances of Power and Preference." Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, edited by J.K. Cole, pp. 163 - 206.

Feldman, R.S. "Nonverbal Disclosure of Teacher Deception and Interpersonal Affect," Journal of Educational Psychology, Vol. 68, No. 6, 1976, 807-816.

Firestone, G. and Brody, N. "Longitudinal Investigation of Teacher - Student Interactions and Their Relationship to Academic Performance," Journal of Educational Psychology, Vol. 67, No.4, 1975, 544-550.

Gates, G.S. "The Role of the Auditory Element in The Interpretation of Emotion," Psycholgical Bullentin, Vol. 24, 1927, 69 - 76.

Galloway, C.M. "An Exploratory Study of Observation Procedures for Determining Teacher Nonverbal Communication." Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Florida, 1962.

Galloway, C.M. Teaching Is Communication: Nonverbal Language in the Classroom. Association for Student Teaching. Bulletin No. 29, National Education Association, 1970.

Hodge, R.L. "Interpersonal Classroom Communication Through Eye Contact," Theory Into Practice, Vol. X, October, 1971, 264 - 267.

Kachur, D. et al. "Improving Teacher's Awareness of Nonverbal Communication in the Classroom," ED 135 777 (February, 1977).

Kendon, A. "Some Functions of Gaze Direction in Social Interaction," Acta Psychologica 26 (1967): 22-63.

Knapp, M.L. "the role of nonverbal communication in the classroom," Theory Into Practice, Vol. X, No. 4, October, 1971, 243 - 249.

Mehrabian, A. and Ferris, S.R. "Inference of Attitudes From Nonverbal Communication in Two Channels," Journal of Consulting Psychology, Vol. 31, 1967, 248 - 252.

Pietras, T.P. "Teacher Expectancy Via Language Attitudes: Pygmalion from a Sociolinguistic Point of View," Journal of the Linguistic Association of the Southwest, scheduled for publication, June, 1978.

Postman, Neil and Weingartner. Charles. "Semantics." Linguistics A Revolution in Teaching, Dell Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 1967, pp. 122 - 153.

Torrance, P. "Teacher Attitude and Pupil Perception," Journal of Teacher Education, Vol. 11, March, 1960, 97 - 102.

Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J.H., and Jackson, D.D. Pragmatics of Human Communication, W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., New York, 1967.